THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) According to the reports received from the state government, the total expenditure incurred on protection and conservation of Rhinos and other species of wildlife in Kaziranga National Park during 1998-99 was Rs. 136.25 lakhs. The amount has been stated to be in adequate for the physical targets to be achieved.

(c) Rhino is placed in schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, thus getting the highest level of protection against hunting and commercial exploitation. Preventive measures are taken against poaching by arranging regular and intensive patrolling by forest staff. High lands are constructed to provide shelter to marooned animals during floods.

Tribals demand on Madhya Pradesh forestry project

1720. SHRI RAMACHANDRAIAH RUMANDLA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether tribals are demanding withdrawal of Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project funded by the World Bank;

(b) if so, the cause of their agitation; and

(c) the action envisaged for ensuring survival of both forests and forests dependent communities of tribals in Madhya Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI):(a) to (c) Mass Tribal Organisations (MTO) of Madhya Pradesh has asked the World Bank to discontinue Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project (a World Bank assisted project) and not to consider Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project Phase-II for funding, due to the project being harmful to the interest of the tribals. The contention of the MTO has been found to be correct by the State Government.

Hunting of Lions in Gir National Park

†1721. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of Lions in Gir National Park in Gujarat and the number of people residing in that region.

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(b) the number of Lions hunted illegally in this region during the last five years;

(c) the number of persons apprehended for illegal hunting and how many of them have been punished; and

(d) the details of measures being taken to reduce the population presence in this park?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) the total number of lions in Gir, as per the latest census conducted during 1995, is 304 and the number of people residing in that region are:

	Settlements	Population
1	Forest settlement villages (14 nos.)	5000(approx)
2	Maldhari nesses (54 nos.)	2540
3	Revenue Villages (97 nos.)	1,52,724

(b) and (c) Number of Lions killed illegally and persons apprehended during last five years are:

Year	No. of lions killed illegally	No. of persons arrested	Action taken
1995-96	3	6	Prosecution launched against the offenders
1996-97	9	21	Prosecution launched against the offenders
1997-98	Nil	Nil	Nil
1998-99	Nil	Nil	Nil
1999-2000	3	2	Prosecution launched against the offenders

(d) Action taken to reduce presence of population in the park include:

(i) check posts have been established.

(ii) entry of people in the park is regulated under section 27 of the Wildlife (Protection), Act 1972.

(iii) eco-development scheme is under operation to reduce the dependence of people on forest usufructs.

Forest Cover in Eastern Ghats

1722. SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any steps are proposed to improve the forest cover in the Eastern Ghats of Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts of Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, whether any proposal for aerial seeding has been considered; and

(c) what specific proposals have been drawn up to ensure impetus to afforestation in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Andhra Pradesh has adopted Joint Forest Management (JFM) approach to manage and protect the forests with peoples' participation. In Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts, about 1102 Vana Samrakshana Samithis have been established and entrusted with an area of 1,44,040 hectares of degraded forests for improving/gap filling through plantation etc. In Visakhapatnam district, Centrally Sponsored River Vally Project Scheme is under implementation to arrest soil erosion and improve forest cover. Planting of non-timber forest produce species is also being promoted. The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Association of Scheduled Tribes and Rural Poor for Regeneration of Degraded Forests on Usufruct Sharing Basis is also being implemented for development of degraded forests.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) A massive afforestation scheme for planting 6 to 7 crore seedings has been launched by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to